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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
**October 4, 2004**

**TRANSFORMATION BEGINS ON  
NORTH WATT AVENUE BEAUTIFICATION PROJECT**  
*First phase breaks ground on facelift for North Highlands thoroughfare*

*North Highlands, Sacramento, CA.* County officials were joined by community and business leaders to officially break ground on the first phase of the North Watt Avenue Beautification Project.

The project is part of a master plan for North Highlands developed by the County of Sacramento and the Sacramento Housing and Redevelopment Agency to enhance the Watt Avenue corridor between Antelope Road and the Capital City Freeway.

“The transformation of Watt Avenue that’s going to occur over the next several years is going to complete that sense of North Highlands that we all maintain and carry around with us as a community that’s vital, that’s alive, that is revitalized and that is one of the very best places in Sacramento County to be,” said Supervisor Dickinson who represents North Highlands in District 1.

The first phase will include \$1.2 million in improvements along North Watt Avenue from Don Julio to A Street. The project will install about .8 of a mile of new bike lanes, .7 of a mile of new landscape medians with beautiful planting and hardscape treatments, and about .3 of a mile of new curb, gutter and sidewalks. The improvements will make the busy thoroughfare more pedestrian friendly and bring new vitality to the commercial corridor.

“We know that the thousands of cars that go up and down Watt Avenue now are going to have even more reasons not just to enjoy going through Watt Avenue and North Highlands,” said Supervisor Dickinson. “But they’re going to have many, many more reasons as the years unfold ahead to stop, to shop, to do business, to stay on Watt Avenue. That’s what makes this exciting.”

The project has been developed through a partnership that includes the County Department of Transportation, the North Highlands Visions Task Force and the Sacramento Housing and Redevelopment Agency. The primary goal of the North Watt Avenue Beautification Master Plan is to create a unique identity for North Highlands that helps to support the existing residential and commercial properties and provides the stimulus for continued redevelopment.

“So this is a great opportunity for us to celebrate,” said Cassandra Jennings, Deputy Executive Director of SHRA. “We want to celebrate what we believe is a catalyst for things to come. There’s a lot of energy already here in North Highlands. Part of our job is to spur a little more. We have façade grants and other opportunities to help businesses. We have opportunities for the residences here. We have lots of opportunities that build upon the momentum to really grow and develop and redevelop and continue to support the North Highlands community.”

The North Highlands Visions Taskforce has been working with the Redevelopment Agency and with the County Government for the past ten years and shares the excitement that the beautification project is generating.

“The business community has responded to the call for improved business facades, signage and all kinds of things that makes for a more attractive business community,” said Merrie O’Brien, President of the North Highlands Visions of Taskforce. “And now with the Watt Avenue development and the median strips and the improvements to the North Watt Avenue corridor, we are really excited.”

“A tremendous amount of creativity and flexibility has contributed to the successful delivery of these phase one improvements,” said County Transportation Chief Michael Penrose. “Improvements of this type are good for the community. They provide a better experience for walking, biking and motoring public.”

The President of the Antelope Highlands Chamber of Commerce said all of the things that are transpiring through this partnership have been a boon to excitement for a lot of people in the area. “We are looking forward to reincorporating the feeling of one community with all of the communities that we have up here,” said Keith Weber. “We want a feeling of community and the business world here in the area wants a feeling of community as well.”

This first round of improvements is part of a \$30 million project approved for federal funding from the Transportation Enhancement Activities Program that will be phased in over several years. Phase one is expected to be completed around the first of the year. The next phase is slated to begin in the spring and will include improvements along North Watt Avenue from Antelope to Interstate 80.

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**SHRA** is a Joint Powers Authority created by the City and County of Sacramento to represent both jurisdictions for affordable housing and community redevelopment needs. SHRA oversees residential and commercial revitalization activities in 13 redevelopment areas throughout the City and County. The Agency is the leading public developer of affordable housing. SHRA has a FY 2004 budget of \$196 million and approximately 328 employees. The Agency owns 3,200 units of public housing and is one of the largest landlords in Sacramento. SHRA also administers about 11,000 rental assisted vouchers per month.